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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2004

THIS REPORT WILL PRESENT A TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER
THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES
BRIEFING
EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

Turkey, Syria won't let Iraq disintegrate - Hurriyet
Assad turns a new page with Turkey - Milliyet
US not bothered by Assad visit - Turkiye
Bush wants problems of US firms in Turkey solved - Milliyet
Papandreou to replace Simitis - Milliyet
Exemplary move: Greece's Simitis to leave his post -
Hurriyet
Kurds threaten to withdraw from IGC - Sabah
PM Erdogan wants national unity government in TRNC - Turkiye

OPINION MAKERS

Bush wants Erdogan to bring a Cyprus solution package to US
- Cumhuriyet
Economy paves the path to peace with Syria - Cumhuriyet
Turkey, Syria share views on Iraq - Cumhuriyet
A happy day with Syria - Radikal
Partnership with Syria for stability, peace - Yeni Safak
Syria becomes Turkey's ally - Radikal
Assad asks Ankara's help for a nuclear-free Middle East -
Zaman
Syria won't give up arms program unless Israel scraps WMD -
Cumhuriyet
Israel should disarm first - Assad - Radikal
Robert Connan: Infrastructure investment best opportunity in
Iraq - Zaman

BRIEFING

Syrian Head of State in Ankara: Turkey and Syria reiterated their joint opposition to the disintegration of Iraq during the first day of an official visit by Syrian President Assad. Assad condemned all approaches that pose a threat to Iraq's territorial integrity. Assad's 'historic' visit to Turkey has contributed to a new atmosphere of trust in bilateral relations through economic cooperation. Syria is to open a consulate in Gaziantep, and Assad said that Syria is eager to sign a free trade agreement with Turkey in the future. Dailies claim that 11 free trade zones, including one in the disputed province of Hatay, will be established near the Turkish-Syrian border. The Turkish side conveyed to Assad a message by Israel urging Damascus to cut support for fundamentalist terror organizations. If a proposal for Turkish mediation between Israel and Syria is accepted, Istanbul may host a summit meeting between the two countries. Assad told the press that Damascus would not end its weapons program unless Israel scraps its WMD program as well.

PM Erdogan's upcoming US visit: The success of the January 28 Bush-Erdogan meeting depends on progress on Cyprus and the solution of problems regarding US investments in Turkey, according to "Milliyet." The US is pressing hard for a breakthrough on Cyprus in January, the paper reports. At a meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan last week, US Ambassador Eric Edelman explained to the Turkish prime minister the American expectation for a settlement on Cyprus by May of this year, "Cumhuriyet" reports. Erdogan is seeking an appointment with UN Secretary General Annan in New York to submit a Cyprus peace package prepared by the MFA. Erdogan will urge Annan to step up pressure on the Greeks and the

Greek Cypriots to resume the Cyprus peace talks. The American side is expected to ask Erdogan to resolve problems faced by a number of US companies that have invested in Turkey. Ankara should not expect the issue of Northern Iraq to be resolved through Erdogan's meetings in Washington, "Milliyet" warns. 200 businessmen and 60 journalists will accompany Erdogan on his visit to the US.

Cyprus: After meeting with Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktas on Tuesday, prime-minister designate Mehmet Ali Talat of the CTP said he would not insist on sacking Denktas as chief negotiator after a government is formed. Dailies highlight Ankara's role in the formation of a new government in the TRNC. A commentary in "Vatan" claims that many AK Party lawmakers share the views of Rauf Denktas. This fact has made Prime Minister Erdogan afraid to take the risk of making concessions for a Cyprus settlement. The military's uneasiness with the Annan Plan is another major factor blocking a possible solution, "Vatan" argues.

Embassy seminars on 'Doing Business in Iraq': In a seminar on Iraqi reconstruction organized by the US Embassy in Ankara and the Ankara Chamber of Industry (ASO), Iraq Private Sector Business Development Director Robert Connan said that the first bids for reconstruction contracts are due by January 15. There are considerable security problems in Iraq, Connan noted, pointing to the negative impact of the unstable conditions on the business community. Contracts amounting to \$18.6 billion will be administered transparently, Connan promised. ASO Chairman Zafer Caglayan complained at the seminar that 'certain difficulties' have been placed in front of Turkish companies doing business in Iraq. A "Hurriyet" column blames Paul Bremer for being reluctant to award contracts to Turkish companies. The seminar will be repeated with local businessmen in Izmir and Istanbul on January 7 and 8.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Syrian President's visit to Turkey

"A New Era in Syria, Iraq and the Middle East"
Murat Yetkin commented on the Syrian president's visit to Ankara in the liberal-intellectual Radikal (1/7): "The Syrian president's visit is a significant step for optimism in bilateral relations. It has provided ground for Ankara to ask Syria's contribution to regional peace. Ankara's message to Syria can be summarized under two headlines. First, just like the US, Turkey wants Syria to change its policy on weapons of mass destruction. Second, just like Israel, Turkey wants Syria to stop supporting Palestinian terrorist groups. Syria prefers to link the WMD issue with Israel, and wants to change its WMD policy only if Israel does the same. Support for terrorist groups, on the other hand, is being held as a trump card against Israel. . Statements by Syrian President Assad during his visit to Ankara prove that he is well aware of the rapidly changing political geography in the Middle East, particularly in the post-war era. Yet it remains to be seen to whether such awareness will lead to radical political changes in Damascus."

"Syria wants to view issues different than before"
Mehmed Ali Birand observed in the mass appeal Posta (1/7): "The Kurdish issue that divided Turkey and Syria five years ago has now pushed the two countries together. Syria used to hold the Kurdish card against Turkey. Whenever Turkey complained, the Syrians would always respond by telling Ankara to solve their own Kurdish issue first. But since then, international developments have led both Turkey and Syria to become frightened by the possibility of a separate Kurdish state. Both countries are now cooperating to avoid this by formulating a joint policy. Turkey for the first time ever seems to have found an ally. It is very obvious that Syria and Turkey need each other. For Turkey, Syria is a door to the Middle East and the Arab world. Each year more than 25,000 trucks carry Turkish goods to the Middle East via Syria. Turkish relations with the Arab world are normalizing in large part due to Syria. For Syria, Turkey is a door that opens to the West, the Caucasus and the Balkans. Turkey can prevent Syria from being crushed by the US and Israel. Leaders from both countries should forget the past and begin their relations from scratch. Syrian President Assad's visit presents an opportunity that should not be missed."